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## THE GREEN VAULTS, DRESDEN.

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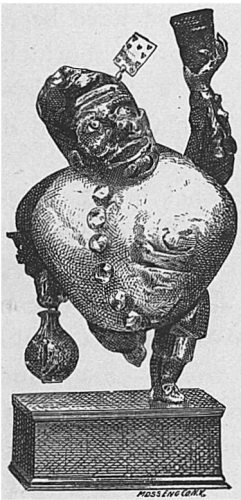


Fig. 1.—SIGNOR PEPE,  
COURT DWARF OF  
CHARLES II. OF SPAIN.  
—XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

FEW cities of Europe contain so much to interest and instruct the art student as does the Saxon capital. Its treasures, moreover, are not only very varied, but often very characteristic of periods which are nowhere else to be studied with the like ease and completeness. The picture gallery contains, of course, samples of many schools and many epochs. But a number of other collections, which are filled with specimens of the minor arts, owe their importance in greater part to the workmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The great sixteenth century is also amply illustrated, but its productions may be as well studied in other places, while Dresden is the chief storehouse of the years which came next after,—the years which saw its rise to greatness and decline therefrom. Before the seventeenth century Dresden was but one among many small and comparatively unimportant local capitals. At the end of the eighteenth, it had sunk to the position which it now fills,—in politics holding a secondary rank, and in art, music alone excepted, living only by virtue of the treasures gathered in its more flourishing epochs. But during the interval—throughout all of the seventeenth, and most of the eighteenth century—it

was the chief social centre in Germany, and was second, indeed, in the north of the Continent, to the French capital alone. Its patronage of art was immense, and was exerted as wisely as the universal taste of the age allowed. Within its walls flourished many of the most prominent craftsmen of the day, and their handiwork was rivalled by all of every kind that Dresden's magnificent rulers could buy from neighboring cities, or import from other lands. Into the treasure-cabinets of these great Electors flowed the full stream of contemporary production; and what then came to Dresden is still there in its entirety for us to see, its collections having been singularly free from the mutations of sale and spoliation which have destroyed or decimated so many in other places. In Dresden as we see it now, history, architecture, and art collections alike speak almost exclusively of its two great centuries. All traces of mediæval and early Renaissance times were swept away by the lavish builders who raised it from provincialism, and modern life has altered to no important extent the aspect of the town they formed. New quarters have been added, but the older portions are practically untouched. The hundred and fifty years of Dresden's glory are as easily reconstructed in its streets to-day as are the mediæval years of some Italian hill town, or, in Nuremberg, the years of the German Renaissance; and there is, to repeat, no other city in Europe of which the same may be said with half the force. To the student of the centuries I have named, a detailed acquaintance with the architectural monuments of Dresden is therefore indispensable; and such acquaintance should be supplemented, of course, by a study of its collections and their treasures of minor art.

Among these collections those held by the so-called "Green Vaults" are the most famous and the most valuable. The casual tourist is always attracted by the crown jewels therein contained, which are, indeed, the finest in all Europe. But the art student finds something better

worth his notice in the immense rooms crowded with objects of art and curiosity and ingenuity, drawn from many centuries, but especially from the three which precede our own. If I attempt here to give the reader some idea of their contents, it must be in a most superficial and fragmentary way. It has been my good fortune to study many times and in detail the contents of this wonderful repository. Vivid recollections are, of course, still present in my mind. But my visits were made some years ago, and without any idea that I might possibly desire in future to



Fig. 2.—BASIN OF GRAY LIMOGES ENAMEL. BY P. COURTEYS. ABOUT 1530.

report of them for other eyes. A well-balanced treatise, even though a brief one, is therefore beyond my best ability. But as my memory is freshened by a splendid array of photographs, recently taken from some of the most beautiful and most famous articles in the collection,<sup>1</sup> I may at least endeavor to indicate its extent and its nature as a whole. Criticism cannot, of

<sup>1</sup> *Das Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden. Hundert Tafeln in Lichtdruck enthaltend gegen 300 Gegenstände aus den verschiedensten Zweigen der Kunst-Industrie. Mit Erläuterungen von Dr. J. G. Th. Graesse. Berlin: Paul Bette. (The short descriptive text is published in German, French, and English.)*

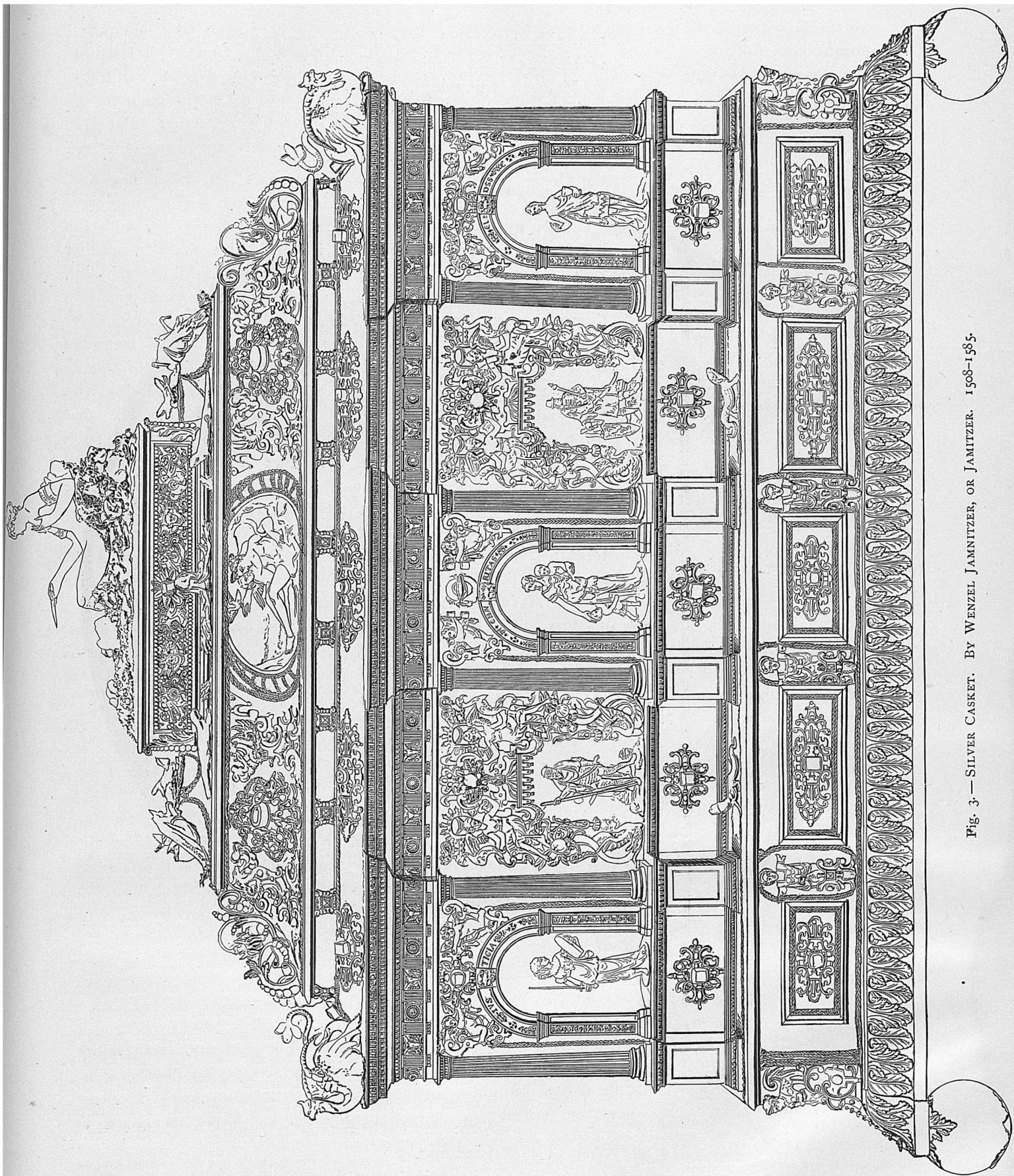


Fig. 3. — SILVER CASKET. BY WENZEL JAMNITZER, OR JAMITZER. 1508-1585.





Fig. 4. — EWER, SILVER-GILT AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL. — XVI-XVII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

cultivated, and patriotic, — all, of course, after his own lights, which were essentially those of his age, — himself an accomplished connoisseur and a worker in art along several lines, Augustus seems to have cared less to rescue the surviving treasures of past epochs than to collect and aid in the production of those made by contemporary artists. To his munificent patronage is



Fig. 5. — PITCHER OF SILVER-GILT. — XVII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

course, be attempted, even if there were space for detailed notice of single objects within the limits of a paper such as this.

Pictures, engravings, armor, weapons, ceramics, and classic antiquities find their place in the other collections of the city. All articles of historical or legendary interest, moreover, have been consigned to the keeping of the Historical Museum. In the Green Vaults we find only the products of the minor arts, valuable for their exquisite workmanship or for the precious materials out of which they are constructed, together with the jewels of the crown. One room is filled with bronzes, another with ivories, and two immense apartments with furniture, mosaics, enamels, works in semi-precious stones, and curious things of a thousand eccentric kinds. Another room is stored with silver plate; another, with extraordinary little figures, worked from the most costly materials; another, with carvings, chiefly of wood; and the eighth, with the royal gems. The first sovereign who contributed to any important extent to make the collection what we now find it was that Elector Augustus who reigned from 1553 to 1586. His immediate successors added their quota, and to these princes are due the many examples of fine Renaissance work. But it was Augustus the Strong, King of Poland (1670–1733), who secured the greater portion of the Green Vault treasures, and who raised the collection to the rank it now holds as among the first of its kind in Europe, — the very first, with regard to specimens of the industry of his own times. Clever,

due, I repeat, the primary importance of the Green Vaults to the student of to-day, its rank as the great treasure-house of the art-work of the seventeenth, and of the first years of the eighteenth century. His successors did not contribute very largely to it, and so the later periods of the eighteenth century — those which saw the full bloom of *Rococo* art and decoration — are not illustrated within its walls as they are illustrated by the architecture and decoration, and by some of the other collections, of the town. The works of Dinglinger, however, the foremost goldsmith of his time, and the especial favorite of Augustus, are present in profusion, and mark the transition from the *Baroque* art of the seventeenth century (*le style Louis Quatorze*, to use its most familiar name) to the true *Rococo* (*le style Louis Quinze*), and furnish, indeed, some most characteristic examples of the latter. (See Fig. 9.)

Beginning with the bronzes, I may note as among the most remarkable a beautiful crucifix,

attributed with confidence to John of Bologna; a dog, by Peter Vischer; a *Bacchus, with Attendants*, said to be by Fiammingo; and some works of Anton de Vries. Also, the famous statuette, nine inches in height, called *St. George and the Dragon*, and representing Charles II. of England, which was wrought out of a single piece of iron by Leigebe, the great Nuremberg blacksmith of the seventeenth century, whose armor and weapons are the finest of their kind,—as may be seen in the Dresden Historical Museum. Most of the bronzes of the one hundred and eleven pieces contained in this cabinet are clever copies, on a small scale, of famous statues. These were made with great profusion in the times of which I speak, and the beauty of their execution entitles them very often to almost as high a place in the estimation of the connoisseur as though they had been original creations.

The Ivory Cabinet contains more than four hundred examples, including both turned and carved work. Chief in artistic worth are numbers of large tankards with superb high reliefs of figures, such as were produced in multitudes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of course we find work attributed, with much doubt, to the hand of Benvenuto,—work which in any case, however, would not disgrace his fame. Of more certain authenticity is a wonderful little group of drunken beggars, carved by Dürer.

The immense apartments filled with larger works must be passed over with but scanty mention. Here we find magnificent specimens of Boule work, some wrought by the inventor of the process; cabinets, large and small, formed of carved wood and semi-precious stones, such as were beloved in the seventeenth century in Germany as well as in the North of Italy; clocks and mirrors and mantel ornaments; enamels and mosaics; vessels of crystal, jasper, agate, jade, rhinoceros-horn, and mother-of-pearl; and huge dishes of beaten brass and silver. The collection of enamels is very interesting. The earlier styles of work, as one might expect, are present in less force than the true painted enamels of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the great school of Limoges come many splendid specimens, signed by or attributed to the brushes of Court and Courteys, Rexmon and Pénicaud, Noël Landin and Jean Limousin. German workmen of a later day, such as Israel Mengs and G. F. Dinglinger, a brother of the goldsmith, are represented by their best. The accompanying illustration (Fig. 2) shows one of the finest specimens in the room.

It is, however, in spite of multitudinous treasures of other kinds, the metal work contained in the Green Vaults which constitutes their chief attraction. It is impossible here to cite even the principal artists represented, or the main styles of workmanship displayed,—much more, to mention individual objects of importance. It is almost hopeless, indeed, to attempt, for those who have not themselves examined such collections as the one in question, any characterization of the metal work produced in the years which saw its splendid bloom, any adequate description of either the

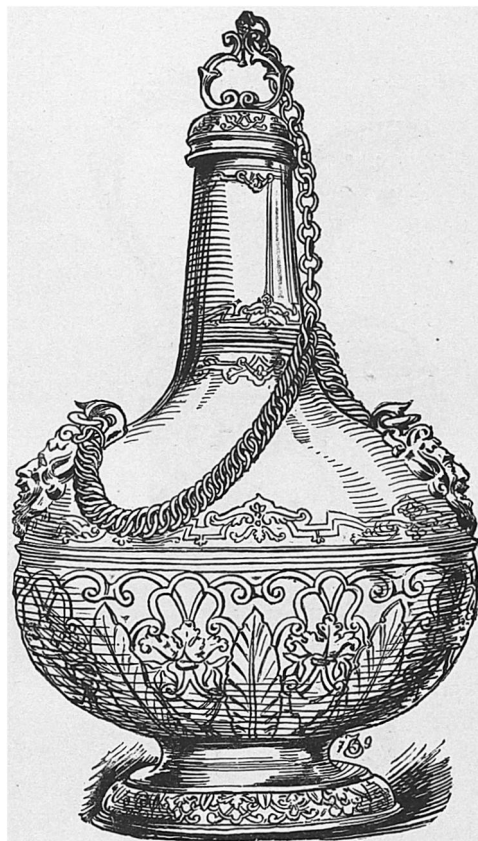


Fig. 6.—WINE-BOTTLE OF SILVER-GILT.—XVIIIth CENTURY.

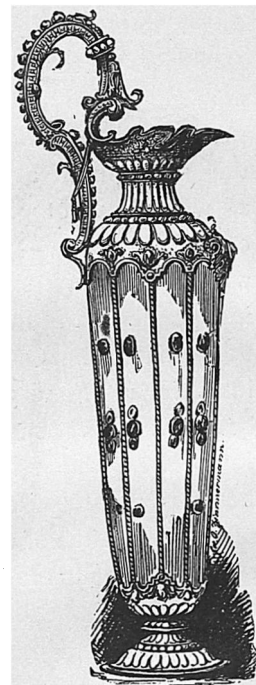


Fig. 7.—VASE OF CHALCEDONY AND GOLD, BY J. M. DINGLINGER.—XVIIIth CENTURY.

quantity turned out or the quality attained by even nameless workmen. The best artisans of our day have no conception of what it then meant to be an artist in metal,—of the *technique* then acquired, or the exuberant and exhaustless fancy then displayed. German artists, though a little later in date, were equal to their Italian brothers along this line. The names of both are, of course, familiar to the art student of to-day; but the general public knows definitely, perhaps, of Benvenuto only, forgetting the great

plants for which Jamnitzer was especially renowned,—which covers every inch of surface, but does not confuse the outline or interfere with the general effect. Of the *technique* I cannot here speak: nor should I be quite understood by those who may have acquaintance only with the results of modern skill. This is true Renaissance art of the richest period. The styles proper to the seventeenth century

Germans, until a Rothschild, connoisseur as well as millionaire, sees fit to give (as was done last year) a hundred and eighty thousand dollars for a silver vase by Jamnitzer. Then, attracted by such tangible proof of greatness, the public for a moment appreciates the fact that a man may produce masterpieces with the tools of the silversmith as well as with those of painter or of sculptor,—masterpieces whose worth is to the full as independent of the worth of their material. One of our illustrations (Fig. 3) shows a beautiful silver casket by this Jamnitzer, who stands at the head, perhaps, of all the German silversmiths of the sixteenth century. No illustration can convey, however, the barest idea of the wealth and beauty of his work. The covered box, architecturally constructed, is loaded with a profusion of ornament,—figures, and the insects and



Fig. 8.—EWER OF SILVER-GILT AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL.—XVIIITH CENTURY.

are illustrated here by Figs. 4 to 8. The Vaults are very rich in specimens of this century, the treasures growing more profuse as the dates get later. All the great German names are represented by fine pieces, some of them almost unique in excellence. Jamnitzer is supplemented by Irminger, Kellerthaler (whose fine *repoussé* basin is still used at the christenings of the Saxon royal family), Herbach of Copenhagen, Thellot of Augsburg, Streller, Harmsdorf, Théodore de Bry (whose present fame rests rather on his beautiful published designs for his co-workers than on remnants of



his own productiveness), and a host of other artists scarce inferior to any on this list. We are accustomed, I think, to look upon the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as upon times when art was prolific indeed, but fantastic rather than beautiful; original, but in a debased sort of way; and marked by affectation and extravagance in its search for novelty and elaboration. They were periods, it is true, when the minor arts flourished more than did the greater. Their representative is not the sculptor, as in classic times, nor the architect, as in mediæval days, nor the painter, as in the superb Renaissance years; but the goldsmith, with others of his kin. Even through much of the vast activity in building and decoration which undoubtedly filled these centuries may be traced the spirit of *Klein-kunst*. Put to such purposes, the ideas characteristic of the time are certainly open to many of the objections brought against them. But when we consider the products of the minor arts, we realize the immense fertility and the genuine, if sometimes extravagant, artistic instincts of the workers. If we consider the gold and silver work of the time, taken by and for itself, we shall not call it, I think, inartistic or mistaken. We find it, of course, original, characteristic, ingenious, fantastic, bewildering, rather than



Fig. 9. — THE HERCULES VASE. — BY J. M. DINGLINGER. 1665-1731.

simply beautiful, or pure in form. But the nature of the materials used, the scale, the modes of workmanship, and the purposes to be served by goldsmith's work, quite justify much performance of this sort, — performance which, as I have said, is indeed out of place and reprehensible in the practice of the monumental arts. Between the

exquisite simplicity or well-balanced elaboration of good sixteenth-century work and the bizarre extravagance of such a thing as Dinglinger's celebrated *Hercules Vase* (Fig. 9), there is a wide interval indeed, — an interval which, as may be seen by examining the Green Vault treasures in their proper sequence, was filled with an immense diversity of work, growing more complex and less "pure" as the years advanced. But in metal work of

small size there is room for all these variations. We may feel personally most inclined to the severer styles;

but that fact should not blind us to the immense fertility of fancy, the wonderful skill of touch, the strange ability to harmonize the most incongruous forms and outlines, and to fuse them into a coherent whole, which characterize the many artisans of even the most florid period of the eighteenth century.

Perhaps the most striking proof of the fondness of the workmen of these two centuries for strange conceits and elaborate detail, and the employment of various substances in the production of their effects, may be seen in that one of the cabinets of the Green Vaults which is entirely filled with minute figures, groups of figures, animals, boxes, and tiny trifles of a hundred kinds, wrought out of gold, and ebony, and ivory, and silver, and enamel, and precious stones. One such figure is given in our initial illustration, and another in Fig. 10. The former is a famous little



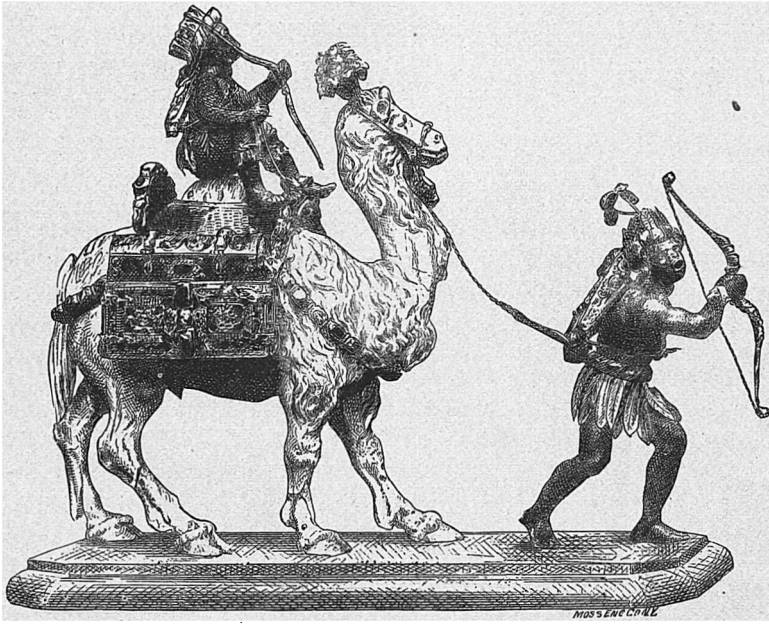


Fig. 10. — DROMEDARY AND MOORS. — XVIIIth CENTURY.

contemporary productions,—an artist in the proper sense has been at work on each, although along such eccentric lines. Hence the art student, as well as the jewel collector and the lover of the curious, may take an interest in the contents of these crowded shelves.

It is popularly thought that the love for such fantastic trifling was characteristic of these times alone. From this belief is deduced the *dictum* that they were intrinsically inferior in artistic capability and taste to the great periods that went before. That they were thus inferior I do not deny. The fact is proved, however, not by the existence of such work as this, but by the lack of other work of greater kinds. The love of grotesqueness and extravagance, and the gratification of that love in the minor arts, were quite as characteristic of the great mediæval and early Renaissance years. They were checked awhile by the classic influence of the Renaissance at its prime, though only to revive in the forms here noted. But as the trophies of the earlier workman have disappeared, almost without exception, those of his later brother are alone remembered, and are quoted as proof of great degeneracy. If any one doubts that the extraordinary creations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—shown by thousands in these Vaults, but scarcely more than hinted at here through lack of space—were even exceeded in grotesqueness and wild imagination by those of the goldsmiths of the great cathedral-building years, I cannot indeed point him to any comprehensive collection of actual objects for his undeceiving; but the records of treasures long ago lost to the world are still preserved, and beside their list of extravagances even the Green Vault catalogue reads tamely. I may here but refer the reader to such documents, for instance, as the well-known inventories of the treasures of Charles V. and Charles VI. of France, made toward the end of the fourteenth century. They are quoted with sufficient fulness for my purpose in Labarte's *Industrial Arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*.

With very much left unsaid that ought to have been written, even to give the barest idea of the extent and value of these collections, I must now close, reiterating the statement that there is no treasure-house of the minor arts in all Europe more vast and more interesting than this; and that there is not one wherein the art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—pre-eminently an art of small things and minor processes—may be studied with the same fulness and completeness of illustration to aid the work. To those, moreover, who cannot examine the collection itself, the photographs which have called forth this short article will be an excellent compensation. And to many a former tourist they will be a potent reminder of hours pleasantly and profitably spent.

M. G. VAN RENSSELAER.

portrait of Signor Pepe, the court dwarf of Charles II. of Spain. The body is formed of a misshapen pearl, which is the size of a hen's egg, and said to be the largest in existence. The rest of the figure is of enamelled gold, and the jewels are fine diamonds. The ability of the artist is shown, not so much in the exquisite minuteness of workmanship, as in the lifelike expression and the action of his curious creation. True sculptor's talent is exhibited, indeed, though with such strange materials and such grotesqueness of effect; and what I say here of this figure may be said of all such